

ADVENTURE PROBE



VOL IV ISSUE 9 SEPTEMBER 1990

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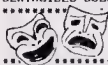
All contributors sending in material between 14th of the previous month and up to copy date will have their names entered in the Hall of Fame for the subsequent month. CONTRIBUTIONS are always needed and ALL readers are invited to send in items for every section. Anything from a single hint or tip to a full blown article are all very welcome. Reviews of the adventures you have played are especially welcome. Please check first to see if a review has already appeared. Don't worry if you cannot send in typed material as handwritten is just as welcome. If you send in contributions for more than one section please use different sheets and make sure you include your name and computer. If you do send in items ready typed then please use A4 with a nice margin all round with text being approx 70 chars across and 60 lines per page. Items can be sent in on disc (all discs will be returned). The Editor is able to print out from Amstrad CPC6128 (Tasword or Protext), C64/128 on (Easyscript or Mini Office II) or Atari ST (First Word Plus). Sorry no printer for the Spectrum. If you send in items for the IN-TOUCH section please clearly mark which are adventures, utilities, arcade etc.

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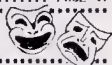
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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL.....	PAGE 4
SOFTWARE REVIEWS.....	PAGE 5
KINGS AND QUEENS OF THE CASTLE.....	PAGE 15
NEWS SECTION.....	PAGE 16
PAWS FOR THOUGHT.....	PAGE 20
SOLUTIONS SERVICE.....	PAGE 20
ADVERTISEMENTS SECTION.....	PAGE 21
LETTERS.....	PAGE 30
HELP WANTED.....	PAGE 36
PERSONAL COLUMN.....	PAGE 36
IN-TOUCH SECTION.....	PAGE 37
A-MAZE-ING ESCAPES.....	PAGE 38
ADVENTURES - DEAD OR ALIVE.....	PAGE 39
HOW IT ALL BEGAN.....	PAGE 41
FISHING FOR RED HERRINGS.....	PAGE 42
BUGS AND AMUSING RESPONSES.....	PAGE 43
THOSE WE HAVE LOVED.....	PAGE 43
GETTING YOU STARTED.....	PAGE 44
HINTS AND TIPS.....	PAGE 45
SERIALISED SOLUTIONS.....	PAGE 47



HALL OF FAME



My sincere thanks to all the following readers who took the time and trouble to send in contributions during the past month:

J. Cox, Vicky Jackson, Tony Melville, M. Dixon, Jim Struthers, Jill Carter, Margo Porteous, Kez Grey, Ron Rainbird, Steve Clay, Jackie Holt, Phil Glover, Nic Ruasey, Paul Brunyee, The Grue!, June Rowe, Neil Shipman, Barbara Bassingthwaite, John Willson, Stuart Whyte, The Wayfarer, Allen Davis, The Balrog, Barbara Gibb, Larry Horsfield, Margot Porteous, Jay Honosutomo, John Yates and Ben isba.

This months great cover picture is by Brian Pell.

CONTRIBUTIONS in the form of Reviews, Getting you Started, Golden Oldies, Bugs and Amusing Responses, Letters, Articles, Hints and Tips are urgently needed please.....Mandy

EDITORIAL

Welcome to Volume 4, Issue 9 of Adventure Probe.



All of you who have applied for tickets for the Convention will be receiving them shortly from Larry, who is preparing helpful maps of the area etc to send with your tickets. As I said in the last issue, we have booked the Convention for during the day but, if we sell more tickets than expected then we can, hopefully, book the room for the evening also. I am delighted to say that we have sold enough tickets to cover our costs (phew!!) but we would still like to sell some more so, please send in your applications as soon as possible. It would be wonderful if we can get as many as possible of us there! I would also like to take this opportunity of expressing my thanks to those of you who, although unable to make the Convention, have sent donations and good wishes for us all. Your kindness really is appreciated. It is going to be a very successful and enjoyable event and Larry has asked me to announce that he will be running a MEGAPLOTS competition at the Convention. The entry fee will be £1 and you will have 20 minutes to test your adventuring skills to the limit! First prize will be £25! There will be three computers available for this competition and entries limited to about three per hour so the entries will be limited and on a first come basis. Larry will be sending details about the competition, together with an entry form, with the tickets. I am also hoping to organise a raffle or two, depending on the response from helpful software houses. There will be interesting stalls and demo's and, of course, the awards, so there will be plenty to see and do.

Please remember that the Convention is an ideal opportunity for the smaller software houses to come along and present their games. Many are already planning to do so, so please let me know as soon as you possibly can if you would like to do the same. Other magazines will be represented too, including Spellbreaker! The editorial team from Official Secrets will also be attending to report on the event. Apart from all this activity, it will be great to have the opportunity for us to all get to know one another and I can hardly wait to meet you all.

I must apologise to John Wilson of Zenobi Software for making a blunder. In the last issue I published a review of Lost Temple of the Incas but John informs me that this game is not yet ready for release so please don't send any more orders for this one until further notice.

As I said in my last editorial, things have been rather hectic during the summer holidays but things seem to be getting more under control now that the children are getting "endofholidayitis" and are preparing to go back to school. It will mean I will have a bit more time to catch up on things and to properly prepare the results of the Probe Questionnaire for publication in the October issue. I will also make sure that all the interesting happenings at the Convention are reported so that those of you who cannot attend will have a share in all the excitement and will hear all about the awards.

Until then, I will sign off and let you all get on with reading the rest of this issue, which I sincerely hope you enjoy. See you all again next month as usual.

Mendy

REVIEWS



AXE OF KOLT

From FSF Adventures, 40 Harvey Gardens, Charlton, London, SE7 8AJ

Available for Spectrum 128k or 48k priced at £3.00

Reviewer PAUL RIGBY

Strange really. Did you know that Larry Horsfield, experienced adventure author and force behind FSF Adventures, has never written an adventure for the Spectrum? Yet his latest release, The Axe of Kolt, is his third Spectrum title? The answer, of course, is that all his Spectrum games have been conversions. From the Acorn Electron, in this case. The Axe of Kolt is his final Electron conversion.

I've watched Larry's progress during these Spectrum days with a certain amount of admiration. His work has exhibited a steady improvement through the initial Magnetic Moon release, followed by Starship Quest as he has grappled with the PAW's enhanced features. The Principia foundation to Larry's success has been attention to detail (as many of his frustrated playtesters can testify as they have to test, yet another, program revision) and his flair for design. The former attribute may delay his release dates but ensures a feature-packed and enhanced game while the latter attribute creates an adventure which is, not only pleasing to the eye, but a joy to play.

The Axe of Kolt is a four part adventure in which you play Alaric Blackmoon (this particular Alaric was out and about well before Zenobi's "Legacy" model - so no letters please), a down and out mercenary and swordsman. The game begins as you arrive in the peaceful kingdom of Hecats. A chance to rest the old bones, soak your feet in some hot water and sip a soothing cocoa? No change. It appears that trouble follows you because the dreaded Xixons (not the dreaded Xixons?!!), a nasty bunch of creatures have returned to attack Hecate after a 200 year lapse of absence. Is this coincidence, or what?

During the original invasion, it seems that Kolt, a local boy come good, did some serious damage with an axe, as he vanquished the invading Xixons but not any old axe you may pick up down your local DIY shop. This was forged from elf-metal by a sorcerer. Years after the original Xixons had been vanquished, Kolt passed away. The axe buried with the great man in his tomb. Now they have returned the axe must be found and delivered to King Kelson (a relative of Kolt) as only the Kolt line can trigger the special powers the axe contains. You, Alaric Blackmoon, must find the axe and return it to Kelson.

Immediately you boot up this adventure you see that the high standards of design have been maintained within the basic presentation framework. The screen information is presented within two windows. The upper displays the location description and never scrolls off the screen. The lower section is the active area featuring text input, messages and so on. Screen colours are used intelligently and are easy on the eye, the choice of font is good and very readable. There is a "vocab" command to bring up a screen of useful words and "info" lists some of Kolt's useful facilities. Nice to see "on-line" help facilities just a press of a button away and not stuffed in the depths of some documentation.

Direct commands are very friendly. "Examine" can be abbreviated to "X", while "get" can be input as "G". There is also an "Again" or "A" command (and very handy it is too). Another nifty feature cuts in if you die. The program asks you if you wish to be re-incarnated. If you say yes, the game will restart at the time of your last save. You can Examine All "carried", "worn" or "hats" and there is an Examine Me command which unlike many adventures which utilise this option as a

gimmick, proves very useful in Kolt, especially during the later stages. The one option that I did miss, though, was a score routine. A matter of taste, this one. However, I do like to know how far I've progressed.

The text descriptions are fairly functional, telling you what you need to know without bombarding you with flowery prose. Most of the atmospheric touches come from examining objects and people. There are no noticeable spelling mistakes - well, anyone who includes "theusaturgical" in their location descriptions must be confident in their spelling! The directional descriptions are very thorough, explaining where each object is in relation to each other - this is a boon for map makers. However, descriptions do not always list all of the exits, so you will need to check those not listed.

The puzzles in Axe of Kolt are nothing short of epic. Sometimes the majority of one whole part of Kolt contains one gigantic puzzle! Take part one, for example. After being introduced to a few minor puzzles to get you started you take on a very long-winded puzzle that will have you roaming around the area in search of objects. It is one of those "I'm not going to do what you want until you get this object" type puzzles that includes around eight characters (I lost count actually!) While not terribly difficult, the initial puzzle is a good way to get you into the swing of things, in preparation for the mind-benders to come! Don't forget to re-visit locations, part one especially, as actions will trigger events in other locations. In addition, because you have to revisit locations the adventure appears to be larger than it really is, as well as giving a non-linear feel to the game. Incidentally, part one appears to contain half of the readership of Adventure Probe! Actually part one triggered off my first criticism. You will need to be at specific locations at specific times. On at least one occasion there was no clue as to where or when I was supposed to meet one character. This complicated things unnecessarily, especially as he didn't appear until I waited a while. I would have liked to have seen more synonyms, especially as I played the 128K version. For example you will need to "staap" on a spider - why not "stand" on the spider? It may not be a grammatically correct description as to what you want to achieve but it is the most common and widely used description used when squashing insects underfoot.

Real time events can be annoying. The fault lies with a lack of an automatic pause routine or too short a time before you need to act. For example, in part two a chap appears and disappears. If you don't follow him pretty pronto you lose your chance forever. You can't contemplate your actions at all which is irritating. Another thing that grated the nerves was that, when special messages are triggered, they only appear once. If you revisit that location you will never see the special message again. So you'll forget where you saw the message. If you leave and attempt to return to that location, and probably forget what the message was about in the first place. On the subject of messages there appears to be a bug in part two. You are faced with an irritated Swarf who wants rid of the hunters seen in the forest before he'll give you some info. He'll need proof that you've done away with the hunters. So you will need to show him a captured bow and arrow. However, after I did this the dwarf fired abuse at me, entered his house and closed the door so I tried again, after knocking on his door to bring him back out again, with exactly the same commands. This time it worked and I got my reward. Poor playtesting I reckon. That's not all, though. During this part of the program you'll come across two spear throwing "hunters" that have killed a deer. Yet you can get away with not showing the spear to the dwarf. Why? It turns out that the only "hunter" the dwarf is concerned with is the bow and arrow-

toting hunter. The game should have made this requirement clear - as it is, you may find yourself running into trouble as you try to kill the spear-carrying hunters.

Speaking of spears, though, takes me back to the puzzles which are, ignoring the above poorly designed area, wonders to behold. The imagination and thought that has gone into producing the puzzles makes the game enjoyably frustrating - if you know what I mean. In fact, Kolt is most enjoyable method of contracting an ulcer I know of! You will need lateral thinking by the bucketful. Even objects you may think have served their purpose may have to be used for a completely different purpose later on. In addition, part three drove me up the wall - purely my own fault - because I had dropped an item earlier in a now inaccessible place. So I had to replay that part again because I had become impatient and hadn't collected enough save games. Beware! because this happened to me three times!

Incidentally, watch out for the return of Mike Erlin in part two! Alao, I'm not sure about this one, but remember the little dwarf/monster seen in the first Barbarian arcade beat'em-up game from Palace Software? Where the little guy drags off your dead opponents? I'm sure it is he who appears in part four - see what you think.

Finally, The Arc of Kolt is available in two versions, 48K and 128K. Apparently the 48K version is a cut-down version of the 128K version but the game is, essentially similar. As a consequence to the puzzle difficulty later in the game Kolt is not recommended for beginners. Even veterans will relish the challenge. I was disappointed in the design/playtest errors which made life rather more difficult than was needed - as if the game isn't tough enough! Consequently, I can only give a reserved recommendation to Kolt. Ideally, I would ask Larry to produce a version 2.0 of Kolt with the errors fixed. Because if they were - Kolt would get my vote for independent adventure game of the year! When you buy this game you will have a chance to win £50 via a competition. Details should be included with your purchase.

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THE TALISMAN OF POWER

By C. Bury, 14 Cliveden Grove, Whitecross, Hereford, HR4 ONE.
Available for Amstrad CPC 464/664. Price £2. per tape (possible disc version to follow!) Reviewer - JIM STRUTHERS played on CPC464.

No this is not an optical illusion, you have read correctly. A new Amstrad adventure game! This should keep all hard up CPC adventure fans quiet for a while. This is the first adventure release from a young man who appears to be going places. Written using GAC and a lot of imagination plus a pointer or two in the right direction/correction by our very own Joan Pancott HPilg, it oozes quality. The story is basically this:

Your quest is to travel to the Temple Of Ezekiel and destroy the evil Lord Orsova who has been ruling with an iron fist and is disliked by all because of his evil deeds. You have been given the task of dealing with him, that is if you get far enough to meet him.

As I began to play this game one word came to mind which sums it up perfectly - REFRESHING. That is to say that it flows along at a lovely pace, building up nicely as you approach the end. It is quite a large game containing some 60 or so locations but seemed larger, such was my enjoyment in playing it. There are no sudden death situations but you can be killed. A bonus, I think, is that you are always given a chance to opt out from a fight. The grammar is good, graphics competent



(bearing in mind the limitations of GAC). Fuzzie content was just about right with some nice little touches. What more could you ask for from a game which is a steal at £2. Well into the game I was beginning to think it was a little too easy but I was wrong. I have to admit that I became stuck even with the aid of a sap, this had me reaching for the telephone to ask for help from a well known personality. I was enjoying the game so much I just had to get on with it. I really hope that game starved CPC users give Chris Gury all the support he needs, and we can encourage him to get on to more games. We Amstraders need him. Go out and post your order off now. It is highly enjoyable and refreshing! - GET IT!

ENIGMA TAPE MAGAZINE

For all Spectrum machines and Sam Coupe compatible. Available from
E.S.D. 15 Westfield Road, Inverurie, Aberdeenshire, AB5 9YR
Priced at £1.99 per issue. Reviewer - PHIL GLOVER.

Reading through the August edition of Your Sinclair I found a special offer in Mike Gerrard's adventure column for the Spectrum tape magazine, Enigma. I thought it rather strange, as most of Mike's offers are for adventure software, but I soon realised why it was featured when I received the tape.

On loading the magazine I was presented an option to save to disc. This could be either Plus D or Spectrum Plus 3. As I have the Plus D system I selected this, and the tape loaded and saved itself to disc with a few stop and start tape prompts.

Reading the magazine is achieved by using left, right, up and down keys to turn pages and access different sections. After a few goes, this method is quite effective. Being keen on adventures, I was pleased to find that much of the magazine is devoted to adventures, starting with a section entitled "The Troll's Scrolls". Many screens of text follow featuring news about Magnetic Scrolls new system, Neverending Story Part 2, Golden Chalice Adventure Awards and so forth. A lengthy interview with Garry Cappuccini, writer of Crack City is featured, as well as a review of Crack City itself, and a review of Mike Gerrard's compilation, "Best of the Indies" which features Double Agent, Domee of Sha, Cloud 99, Secret of Little Hodcombe, Labours of Hercules and Retarded Creatures and Caverns. A small competition with a rather tricky question is in the magazine, the prize being a plus 3 disc version of Lancelot. A section called "The Troll's Helpline" gives many hints and tips to the Hobbit, Dun Darach, Marsport and the solution to the first third (I think) of the Pawn.

All the adventure material is written in a lively and friendly style by The Troll, whoever he is. His address is Louisville Ave, Aberdeen, and he might be known by some Probe readers, I should think. Also on the Enigma 7 tape is part one of Jekyll and Hyde, not just the 48k version but the 128k version as well! Parts two and three will be featured in forthcoming issues, as well as more adventure material. Another program on the tape is Plus D Hacker by Steve Nutting. If you've a Plus D, you can save it to disc and use it to study programs in memory including reading the text of adventure games occasionally. Just finding a block consisting of verbs used can be very useful, if desperate! The last program on the tape is a Sam Coupe music demo. (The rest of the magazine is mainly arcade-based).



INTO THE MYSTIC

Reviewed by JUNE ROWE on Spectrum 128K

The countryside was in an uproar - folk congregated and spoke in hushed tones. "Where had all the magic gone?" they asked each other. "Without magic, our lives are empty and void!"

And indeed they were, as there was no telly in those days, so after a hard day in the fields, what better way to unwind than to sit with a jug of ale watching old Merlin conjure up new and mysterious tricks?

Sadly they could no longer enjoy a pleasant evening like this, because all the magic produced was disappearing into the earth.

So the Privy Council held a meeting and decided that Merlin should choose someone to solve the problem.

Guess who? Why, you, of course! Merlin appeared at your door, and said you should start off on your quest dressed in just a smock so that you wouldn't upset anyone you happened to meet on the way.

He pointed you in the right direction to start off, so off you went, thinking "Some quest! No armour, no weapons, no money, no nothing!"

However you do have your wits, and you will surely need them, because the game starts at dawn, with you near an old fortress, and a band of sleeping orcs in a clearing to the north.

You will quite soon find out that even though you get rid of these particular baddies, the woods are infested with outlaws. Finding a way to avoid them provides one of the many puzzles you will meet, in this new game from River Software.

You will need to disguise yourself to get into a couple of places, to think cryptic to figure out one or two of the clues, and have to be familiar with the ways of magicians to succeed.

There is no help as such in this game, but there are plenty of clues to help you on your way. Just remember that EXAMINE and SEARCH bring different responses, LOOK everywhere, and make frequent use of the sanity-saving RAMSAVE facility, because there are a few lethal situations!

I found this a thoroughly enjoyable game, in the best tradition of adventures - the sort of game which makes you want to go on playing it, even if you do get killed.

The game will be available at the PROBE Convention on September 15th, but if you can't wait until then to see it, send your cheque for £2.95 (payable to J.A.Lockerby) to 44 Hyde Place, Aylesham, Canterbury, Kent, CT3 3AL.

DEFINITION OF ADVENTURING

By EMMA HEGGIE

When you've been stuck for ages, and inspiration strikes in the middle of Tesco. YOU can't wait to rush home, set up the computer, and with trembling hands type in the fateful command, only to be greeted with the words: "you can't do that".



THE BEST OF THE INDIES - Volume 1

A 6-adventure compilation on one cassette for the 48/128K Spectrum
published by Zenobi Software at £3.99

1. DOUBLE AGENT by Tom Frost of Tartan Software

Set in the future, but sounding more contemporary than I care to imagine, this adventure concerns the planet Marego which has been invaded by rebel forces who are slowly killing the planet by polluting the air, soil and water with a crystal so powerful it has to be stored under oil to lessen its effect - exposure to air for even a short time has disastrous results.

You were leading a task force sent to help the planet, but your party was captured, tortured and most of the agents killed by the rebels. Only two managed to escape. Neither are capable of original thought or action, but their built-in communicators allows you to control them via one and two word commands transmitted from the control console of the mother-ship. Agent 1 is strong but can no longer speak or read, while Agent 2 is intelligent and understands the Maregian language. You hope that by making full use of the combined efforts of these two agents you may still succeed in the secondary task of the mission; that is, to obtain samples of rock and water, and if possible, the crystal.

The game loads with an impressive screen drawn by Shaun McClure. The actual playing screen is divided into 3 panels - a narrow one at the bottom for the controller's inputs; the remaining area is divided down the middle - the left side for Agent 1 and the right for Agent 2. Responses are displayed in the relevant section and scroll upwards. The print has to be small to fit the limited space and sometimes it is difficult to read, particularly the very important numbers. To help you recognize which agent is under instruction, the control panel background colour corresponds to the location colour of that agent, i.e. either blue or yellow.

Each agent is controlled separately and alternately unless one is DN HOLD by the use of the input WAIT. It sounds complicated and I admit I was very apprehensive at first as usually I have enough trouble playing adventures as a single person without having to play one as a split personality. However, with practice I learnt to stay with one agent until he couldn't do any more, and then gave the other a chance.

There are less than 30 locations and most of the action is inside a building. Agent 1 has to negotiate a maze of bleak and barren landscape before reaching what I considered the back door, and Agent 2, the intelligent one, goes in the front door. After individual mini-adventures they meet in the middle. Now it gets very tricky for they must co-operate with each other to collect the samples of rock and water, and particularly the crystal which requires precision timing. A tricky adventure made all the more interesting with the addition of the extra dimension.

2. CLOUD 99 by Linda Wright

You are aroused in the early morning by a voice calling your name. You think you have had a dream in which Jack Frost has been having some fun messing about with the weather-halls on Cloud 99. Could it be the result of too much coffee and too many biscuits last night, or does someone really need your help?

Your curiosity gets the better of you, and you decide to investigate. The game starts here. First, you must thoroughly explore the house, garage and garden, collecting warm clothing and various everyday objects before climbing to the top of that mysterious ladder where the weatherman is impatiently waiting. If you have the key you can pass through the gate to arrive at Rainbow Square which has exits in all directions, similarly the other two squares. All three squares are accessed using the appropriately coloured card. You must travel between these squares to find the means of correcting Jack Frost's sabotage.

The author has very cleverly woven together familiar places such as a laundrette and a balery with the fantasy of a Rain Hall, Ice Hall etc. A few characters are static, but some, such as the American tourist move around. They all need your help, and will reciprocate. TALK to the characters, and EXAM everything generally gives an idea of what is required.

To start, an unimpressive loading screen gives way to the playing screen. This is arranged with the top line showing your score, plus the time which ticks over at the rate of 2 inputs per minute; beneath this is the location text with responses scrolling underneath.

I wasn't keen on the character set which appeared rather blotchy on my television, but the wonderfully imaginative storyline more than made up for this little moan.

3. THE LABOURS OF HERCULES by Terry Taylor

Hercules is a familiar character from Greek mythology but I realised I couldn't name more than five of his tasks, so before I started this adventure I decided to do a bit of research. He is an adventure writers dream character. Not many heros had such exciting lives, and just one deed would be enough for any adventure, but here you get the complete set of twelve.

Legend tells that Hercules, driven mad by a jealous Hera, killed his wife and children. The Gods decreed that he serve King Eurystheus for twelve years. Some say Eurystheus hated Hercules, his superior, and imposed the "impossible" tasks on Hercules out of spite. Whatever his motive, it resulted in some very ingenious labours. Fortunately Hercules was a match for them; are you?

This is a Quilled and Pressed game, and although the text is brief it

is informatively adequate, however a little prior knowledge of the methods used by Hercules will be useful. Some items are lying around from the beginning (such as food and weapons) but some are generated for the appropriate labour ensuring that each one is completed in turn.

You start in the Throne Room. Eurystheus decrees that for the first task he wants Hercules to bring him the carcass of the Lion of Nemea. After finding a useful item in the armoury you're on your way. Always return to the Throne Room and GIVE (object) to Eurystheus who will then give you further instructions. The tasks are varied, as are the methods of kill or capture; some are obvious such as the Stables, some more complicated, particularly those involving a sea voyage.

I did run into one unexpected problem. There is no RAMSAVE (that I could find anyway), so I was frequently saving to tape. The second task is a Head of the Hydra, and I was most frustrated to find that after negotiating a deadly swamp maze, chopping off the requisite Head, and racing back to GIVE it to the King, I was told "That is not possible". More experienced adventurers may know the cause of the problem, but it was many frustrating hours later that I realised that if I used a SAVED position from the outward journey I couldn't finish the task, and as the majority of labours involved one of the mazes in the game, my tape-recorder was working overtime. I overcame the problem by saving whenever I visited the Throne Room, and once I had worked out the exact details of the current task, I re-started from the Throne Room and went through it uninterrupted - it worked every time.

Did I mention mazes? There isn't just the expected Labyrinth, but a terrific ocean maze, a forest maze, a grassy plain maze, and the aforementioned swamp maze. A treat for maze-lovers, a bore for the rest of us.

Despite the last two moans "The Labours of Hercules" is a remarkable feat of programming, and it never ceased to astonish me how Terry Taylor has managed to squeeze everything into 48k. I thoroughly enjoyed the adventure, especially as it kept so close to the legend.

4. THE DOMES OF SHA by Jack Lockerby of River Software

This adventure is set on the planet Olaxas, a once thriving world but alas no longer, for the WAR devastated the land. It seems that no records of that period have ever been found, and the Elders can't recall any details. The only survivors are the Sha tribe who dwell in an encircled valley of the same name. The land is barren and they know of nothing beyond their valley as an "unseen force" seems to prevent them from leaving.

It appears the Sha people have waited a long, long time for you and your adventurous spirit to emerge and discover the secret of the six domes which encircle and dominate the valley. So together with Grunt (who is small and cowardly and not a gentle giant as I at first imagined) you set out to release your tribe from the "Cold Fear".

The simple loading screen gives way to a neat character set and screen display. I got off to a very, slow start because I found the map difficult to draw. I could visualize the layout of the valley from the very descriptive text, but only after two false starts did I manage to draw a map that I could understand. The Up's, Down's, In's and Out's caused the problem because I never knew where to draw them.

There are a few vital actions to perform above ground, not least discovering the light source, (I liked the answer), before venturing through the rock door and exploring the underground passages and caverns. From hereon the adventure became more compelling. You discover the purpose of the domes and start to destroy their power.

Some of the puzzles are easy to solve, and some are more difficult. I was gnashing my teeth over the lever/chain/bucket problem into the small hours of the morning.

Niggly things like messy maps and spelling mistakes are cancelled out by an original idea turned into a well-constructed and interesting adventure.

Can you remove the "Cold Fear" and ensure you are born to have the opportunity of playing the game in the first place?

5. THE SECRET OF LITTLE HODCOME by John Wilson of Zenobi Software

In this adventure you have to discover and defeat the source of Evil that is affecting the hamlet of Little Hodcome. You have bought an idyllic cottage in the country but the estate agent fails to arrive with the key.

I don't think there is anything sinister about his non-appearance; it's just a ruse to test your adventuring ability. Once inside the cottage a quick survey seems to allay any suspicions, but maybe once you have a bit of light to work by things will look different.

A wander down to the village tavern for a drink and a chat with the locals arouses your curiosity once more, so, provided you can re-enter the cottage, and have the means to explore "dark places" you can now venture into eerie secret passages, creepy cellars and the seemingly deserted church and its overgrown graveyard.

Despite the serious nature of the subject, there are some lovely touches of humour e.g. the sign in the dry cave announces that T. Merryweather (Bridge Builder) has gone fishing but it will be back to business as usual tomorrow.

Nothing is obvious, and as your carrying capacity is limited the "red herrings" can be a bit of a hindrance.

A nicely presented and compact adventure that makes you wish for more.

6. RETARDED CREATURES AND CAVERNS by John Wilson

I suppose if you have a neighbour like Bulbo you can expect him to involve you in an adventure sooner or later.

It seems Bulbo had shown interest in role-playing and something called R.C & C. He'd completed the application form and sent it off with some of his precious gold. Two days later a small brown jiffy-bag arrived containing a map, a tatty pouch, and a sheet of badly-copied instructions, together with a note requesting him to go to Castle Toidi on the 25th of the month. Bulbo has a prior engagement for that day - he has to receive the "Iron Jug" award on behalf of Zenobi Software - so he thought you, Algernon, would make an ideal stand-in, even going so far as to lend you his clothes and precious red leather boots.

Algy now finds himself outside Castle Toidi (anagram of I do it?) and wondering how to get inside. No secrets given away here, just the advice to EXAMine every noun you can find and later you could try a four letter word beginning with W. You don't even have to make a map for there are a maximum of 6 (six) locations. That doesn't mean it is a 10-minute adventure. Unless you already know something about R.C.& C. you will find plenty to keep you occupied for hours and hours as there are so many devious puzzles in it.

Once inside the Castle you will find a hungry and house-proud Dragon, obviously the cross-eyed vivid green one from the loading screen drawn by The Balrog. The dragon is quite affable unless you annoy him, so consider carefully before moving E, W or N out of here.

From time to time a one-legged Elf will appear. He's one of the nuisance factors, but doesn't seem to mind being told to "hop it". There are other characters in the adventure but describing them will spoil the surprise.

The role-playing bit? That is when you are asked to choose between playing a Warrior or a Magician. Your answer makes no difference to the game as freely admitted by the Elf, and he doesn't seem to notice that Algy is already masquerading as Bulbo.

A well-presented and entertaining adventure, exactly what you would expect from the master himself.

Summary

Six adventures on one tape for £3.99 must be the bargain of 1990, even if you already have 1 or 2 of them. According to the accompanying five-page leaflet Mike Gerrard claims to have had something to do with the tape. We don't always agree, but I must applaud his choice and assessments.

It's impossible to please everyone all the time, so a collection of adventures with differing storylines by 5 different writers seems an

ideal way of sampling the work of someone you may not have heard of before, or never got round to sending for their adventures.

Sadly Linda Wright has retired from writing for the Spectrum, but her adventures are still available from Zenobi Software.

Tartan Software and River Software will be pleased to supply details of their other excellent adventures, but remember to include an SAE.

Terry Taylor is a new name to me and I shall certainly enquire about other releases. If he can write Hercules on the Quill, what could he write on the PAW?

Last, but not least, the man himself, John Wilson. Nowadays he doesn't have time to write anything new, as he works 18 hours a day, 7 days a week, to supply adventure-hungry Spectrum and Atari owners with first-class adventures written by other authors. Perhaps when the right storyline comes to mind he can be persuaded to take a "holiday" to write another adventure of the calibre of "The Secret of Little Hodcome". In the meantime his other adventures are still available.

Reviewed by Barbara Gibb

GRUE'S GREAT GURGLE

or

Entharion's Exit



Grievously gashed, Grue grimaced, groaned groggily. Gradually Recovering, resolved retribution, required recompense. Reaching Upward, ultimately urging unique, unseen ugliness unto Evening, espied enemy, Entharion!

Venturers venerated victor. Viva! Viva! Venomous vermin vanquished. Salutations! Shadows stifled solitary sunbeam. Stillness. Shuffling...

Eventide ending, Entharion eschewed egress, electing encounter. Newborn night. Nervousness. Noticed nothing. No! Noises nearby. Trees trembled. Turning, tenseness testifying to trepidation. Hero heard horrible hiss. Heart hammering, he hewed hawthorn, hacked Acacia - and air! Anticipating attack, 'Arion's arch-enemy angled Round rearwards, roared rapaciously, revealing razor-sharp Incisors. Immediately impaled ignoble intruder, injuring irrevocably. Ordure oozed out. Offal overflowed, offering one outcome - Oblivion. Noisome newcomer now nullified; Nightspawn's nemesis. Nirvana!

By Wabewalker



"Two for One" - Jack Lockerby and Roger Betts.
Available from Zenobi Software for Atari STs - £4.99.
26 Spotland Tops, Cutgate, Rochdale, Lancashire. OL12 7NX.

The Challenge.

Living from day to day as a skilled hunter and trapper, life in the village was fine until the Old Chief died and leadership of the settlement was left with a huge question mark hanging over it.

Pacheo was the chief's eldest son and therefore the natural choice to succeed him, however, Pacheo had built a reputation of being cowardly as well as being a bully and is not well liked. He vowed to banish you from the tribe if he were to be made chief, so when a cry of 'Challenge' arose at a meeting, you gladly voiced your agreement to meet the challenge with Pacheo.

Each of you is given one half of a sacred medallion and to return to the village with both halves, together with a fabled Blue Stone, would ensure you would be acclaimed the rightful chief!

Initial exploration reveals a forest area where many useful items may be uncovered, and also the village area where, unfortunately, the inhabitants are reluctant to talk to you, or (worse still) they won't even allow you any food because of the vow you took when accepting the Challenge (and that stew looked so appetizing)! Access to the rest of the adventure will be found soon enough, but not before the first encounter with Pacheo who, unless you take the correct action, will be only too eager to show his axe wielding prowess.

Although there are a few situations where the adventure finishes rather early, such as when you are caught by Pacheo, mostly the adventure simply blocks your action, forcing the grey matter into overtime to resolve the particular problem. For example, a lion will block a certain route you must negotiate but, whereas in, dare I say, a 'lesser' adventure, the lion would rip you limb from limb, the Challenge's lion simply warns you away while standing it's ground until you find the solution.

The adventure plays at a steady pace, allowing you time to progress from problem to problem. There are additional text messages which appear every so often to add to the static descriptions, such as when you see the two old women previously tending the stew chasing a poor dog across the village, axes drawn! Problems are very logical and include a couple of more devious puzzles thrown in for good measure.

The Thief.

As a secondary adventure, the Thief is more a traditional fantasy than the Challenge - complete with a King, a castle and plenty of treasures to recover. Whilst in an adventurer's retreat, hoping to take things easy now that you've opted for early retirement, the King's Treasury has been sacked and various treasures have been stolen. Obviously wanting the best person on the job, the King summons you to use your skill and expertise in recovering his lost treasure adding a promise that any other treasures you find are yours to keep.

Puzzles follow a similar pattern to those in the Challenge, but I admit to finding the Thief slightly tougher (thanks for the tips, Mandy!). It also contains a twist in the form of the Thief who adds to the problems by 'stealing' any items you are careless enough to drop.

Actually, as you can only carry 4 items without wearing them, this requires a fair amount of forward planning to avoid you having your hands full and finding that you need an extra item to solve the next puzzle! You can retrieve these 'atolen' items, but not until much later on in the adventure. This reminded me of the pirate in the Crowther and Wood's adventure who stole your items just when you wanted them and took them into one of the mazes. To counter the thief, there is a treasure chest you can uncover which the thief finds too cumbersome to steal, so your items are safe if placed in here!

"Two for One".

Both adventures allow the usual complex sentence input, together with memory save and load commands. Additionally, they also offer the use of the OOPS and AGAIN commands to ease your adventuring. There are about 80 locations in the Challenge, and about 110 in the Thief (which I believe was originally titled 'The Realm Of Darkness').

Although released some time ago on Spectrum and CBM 64 formats, the two adventures discussed here are now available for Atari STs in a single package. Zenobi Software are calling "Two for One". The adventures are on one single sided disk in a smart, black, PVC wallet, my only niggle about which is that it would be convenient to have a label on the spine to indicate the contents if you were to build a library of these (Ok, so I'm being pedantic!).

The adventures were both developed using Incentive's STAC and both afford a user friendly (or should that be adventurer friendly?) approach to your problem solving as you would perhaps expect from adventures originally published by River Software. I did find a couple of buglets in these conversions, but I'm sure that with the likes of Jack Lockerby on the case, these will be cleared up by the time you read this.

Overall, these are two very impressive and enjoyable adventures, and are also very affordable. Personally, I preferred the Thief for the puzzle content, while the Challenge had the better scenario, but as you're getting both together, I can do little but commend the package.

Reviewer - Paul Brunyee.

KINGS AND QUEENS OF THE CASTLE

JACKIE HOLT, 13 Montague St, Bulwell, Nottingham, NG6 8EU can offer help with the following Spectrum adventures: AURAL QUEST, BDDZE UP, BORDER HARRIER, CASTLE THADE REVISITED, CLOUD 99, COLOUR OF MAGIC, THE CALLING, DIAMOND TRAIL, DR GOO AND THE SAMORANS, DON'T PANIC PANIC NOW, DARK STORM, ESCAPE FROM SYLON 6, FUTURE TENSE, FIRELANCE, FAERIE, FERGUS FURGLETON, JACK THE RIPPER, LOADS OF MIDNIGHT, MONSTER, MINDBENDER 2, MADCAP MANOR, NIGHTWING, NIGHTMARE, ONCE UPON A LILY PAD, PICTURE OF INNOCENCE, RIFTS OF TIME, SCARY MANSION, SEALED CITY, THIEF (Corrupt Code), VIRUS, VENOM, WOLFMAN, WIDTH OF THE WORLD.

BEN ISBA, 11 South Rd, Bowdon, Cheshire, WA14 2JZ can help with the following Amstrad adventures: HEROES OF KARN, MESSAGE FROM ANDROMEDA, FOREST AT WORLD'S END, GREENLINS, MOONMIST, HOLLYWOOD HI-JINX, THE ISLAND, THE BASE, THE TEST, WOLFMAN and SEABASE DELTA.

DON'T FORGET TO ENCLOSE S.A.E. WHEN WRITING FOR HELP!

NEWS

NEW FANZINE ARRIVES!



SPLATT! A new bi-monthly magazine with a difference will be launched at the Probe convention! Splatt is an adult Cartoon-zine by our very own Krazy Kez Gray and co-editor Roy Edwards. The first copy of this zany magazine arrived on my desk this morning so I will be reviewing it shortly in more detail. Kez tells me, "Although most of the pages will be dedicated to cartoons, we hope to have a set of regular computer pages, record reviews, problem page and a puzzle page and hope to have a competition in every issue." The cartoons are hilarious and the whole magazine is very professionally put together. I must stress that this is an adult magazine as Kez doesn't pull any punches but, if you are broad-minded you should find it extremely funny - I nearly died laughing whilst trying to think of a suitable caption for the competition cartoon and can hardly wait for the results. But don't just take my word for it - why not send off for a copy and see for yourself. Splatt costs just £1.25 per issue and is available from Krazy Kez Gray, Cartoon House, 3 Alder Crescent, Orford, Warrington, Cheshire, WA2 8AQ. Cheques etc made payable to K Gray.

HOME-GROWN ADVENTURES FOR THE AMIGA!

At last there is good news for Amiga Adventurers. I heard today from Dylan Thomas who has just launched his own company called DEMON. Dylan tells me that his first release is called "Midnight Thief" which was written on his own system. Dylan is also working on his second game with an updated system. The new system has mouse driven menus, customized screen colouring, four different text styles, full screen graphics which only come on when requested, status bar, built in saveable notepad and an updated parser. The new game will be called "Witchcraft" and reverses the tradition of the good guy in adventures. In this game you play the part of a very disturbed young warlock apprentice whose father has been killed. It sounds a very intriguing story with a most unusual ending. Another nice point is that all of Dylan's adventures are set in his own world called Arrrrk, which he has spent over a year in the making. "Midnight Thief" comes with an adventure guide and map and is very reasonably priced at £4.50. A review of this adventure should appear in Probe soon but if you can't wait to get your hands on this one then send cheque or postal order payable to D.Thomas and sent to 29 Llewellyn St, Glynneath, West Glamorgan, SA11 5AF.

NEW RELEASE FOR THE ATARI ST

Geoff Atkinson and his partner have just completed a new 2 disc detective adventure called "The Blag". Geoff tells me that "this is written with STAC and features digitized graphics and extensive use of link files to enable the player to take his or her suspects to Court, question them and, to satisfy any aggressive tendencies, attack them with a police dog." (I am doubtful about any beneficial effects to the player in providing them with this last facility! A copy of this game will be sent in for review in Probe shortly so this will be thoroughly investigated....Ed). The adventure costs £7.99 plus 50p postage and packing. For this you get the game on two top quality branded discs, a printed manual and a free "I've played The Blag, have you?" pen. For more details or to purchase, contact Mr G Atkinson, 60 The Green, Rowlands Castle, Hampshire, PO9 6AB.

NEW INFOCOM NEWS!

Our Gordon Inglis has been keeping watch on the Infocom scene and sent me a cutting from a recent edition of Computer Trade Weekly which states, "Virgin Mastertronic last week lined up yet another coup in the budget market as it grabbed the rights to Activisions prestigious Infocom back catalogue. These will be launched by the budget specialist at Earls Court in September. The titles will be available on the Amiga, Atari ST and PC but they will not be part of Mastertronic's 16-bit stable. Instead the firm is planning to create a new identity combining both the Mastertronic name and the Infocom name which it sees as an important marketing tool. They will also stray from the usual 16-bit budget price point of £4.99. The ST and Amiga versions will sell for £7.99 with the PC versions at £9.99. Mastertronic say that they have established the new price points because these games are aimed at a slightly older audience and also they sold at a much higher price originally - usually around £35." The titles involved are Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy, Planetfall, Wishbringer, Leather Goddesses of Phobos and Zork. Could this be the start of a new beginning for Infocom? It is definitely a step in the right direction!

NEW RELEASES FROM ACCOLADE!

ACCOLADE have announced the release of "Search for the King" a new graphic adventure game for IBM PC. The storyline is about Les Manley, a humble employee of WILL - the lowest rated television network in New York. He spends his time at the station rewinding videotapes by hand to save electricity and wishing he looked more like Mel Gibson than Woody Allen. But now there is a chance for Les to turn his headrum existence on its head. In order to raise its ratings WILL has sponsored a contest whereby it will award \$1 million to anyone who can find The King - the worlds greatest and most elusive rock star. Les' quest for The King lands him in many sticky and amusing situations in and around such places as New York, the local circus and Las Vegas. Written using Accolade's new graphic adventure "engine" developed by Cartwright Berlyn and Bob Smith, manager of Software Tools Development the parser is much more intelligent and understands a wider variety of commands. The new engine further gives designers capacity for more detailed graphics and more animation. The game uses bit-mapped graphics and digitised images. The game costs £29.99.

ANOTHER adventure from this stable will be "Altered Destiny" and should be released in November 1990, again for IBM PC. P.J.Barrett never hurt a fly. He's worked quietly but efficiently all these years and been rewarded with his middle management post. It's just another evening for P.J. Comfortably settled in front of the T.V. with his long-standing girlfriend and a bowl of popcorn, he prepares to watch the film festival, carefully selected for this evening's viewing. But for P.J.Barrett things are about to take a dramatic turn when he is literally sucked through the screen, popcorn included, into a fantastical alternate world unlike any he could ever imagine and with problems unlike any he has ever encountered. He is approached by Jon Quah who sends him on a mission to find Helmer, Jon Quah's twin brother. Helmer has been corrupted by a jewel whose powers are destructive and are slowly destroying the universe! Price £29.99.

ACCOLADE have also just announced that they have obtained the rights to the New Role Playing Adventure featuring ELVIRA MISTRESS OF THE DARK. This game should be available for the IBM PC, Amiga and Atari ST from October of this year. Details of prices etc as they come in - watch this space!



PAWS for Thought - by Larry Horsfield.

This article is gonna be a quickle, as I've been very busy with preparations for the Adventure Probe Convention. Don't forget that I will be running a PAW workshop, and anyone with any queries whatsoever about PAW is urged to ask me at the Convention, where I will hopefully be able to actually show you on screen.

A couple of months ago I purchased, very cheaply, a Spectrum +3 and, shortly afterwards, upgraded to the disk version of PAW. Whereas the +3 has its critics, I for one have found it an asset for adventure writing. No more waiting for ages for databases to load, save or verify. A 128k database will load in less than one minute - wonderful!

As I have been using the +3, I quickly discovered one trick that saves me even having to keep swapping disks when saving databases, then having to put back the PAW disk to make alterations - unlike the tape version of PAW in 128k mode, the overlays are not held in page 7...there is no page 7! So, when you want to switch from, say, response to the locations table, the +3 PAW will access PAWOVR 5 directly from disk. All you need to do is, using the "backup" utility on the PAW disk, make a copy of PAW on your actual database disk. I add the PAW User Overlay PAW-TEL to each database disk, but erase the TEWK adventure-files and PAWOVR H, which isn't used. These last three operations have to be done in +3 BASIC mode, but only take a few minutes.

Anyway, that's it for this month. I hope to be writing longer and more interesting articles in the near future, so watch this space. As I said earlier, I'm looking forward to meeting everyone at the Probe Convention, so if you have any queries about PAW, or would just like to see "how it's done", don't be afraid to ask.

SOLUTIONS SERVICE

LATEST SOLUTIONS RECEIVED

ACDRNS QUEST. ADVENTURE 200. ADVENTURELAND. AMAZON (As Expedition Leader). AMAZON (Expert Level). AMAZON (Novice Level). ANAGONS TEMPLE. ASHKERON. AURAL QUEST. THE BALL. BARSACK THE DWARF. BIMBLES. BUFFER ADVENTURE. DEADLY MISSION. JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF EDDIE SMITHS HEAD. PLAY IT AGAIN SAM. RETARDED CREATURES AND CAVERNS. SOULDRINKER. TRIXIE'S QUEST. WITCH HUNT (Classic Quests).

Solutions cost 30p each. If you would like the complete list of solutions available then please send a S.A.E. to Adventure Probe.

ADVENTURES

48K ADVENTURES

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***** SPELLBREAKER! *****

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SANDRA VOGEL
3 ALDEN COURT, STANLEY ROAD, WIMBLEDON, LONDON, SW19 8RD

Version 3.00

III

8:58PM Wednesday, September 15th,
1941

Office

A window behind my desk blinked
a neon message for a moment,
then dulled, the office pausing
in darkness only to reappear
like a rabbit pulled out of a
magician's top hat as the neon
blinked again.

Rain battered at the windows
noisily.

Spectrum Screen Shown

Dead End



(Top) The world
of Marlowe
comes to life in
Dead End

(Bottom) The
acclaimed
story *Dead End*

DEAD END

A Nightmare waits for Philip Marlowe. Is Miles Dunbar's death the suicide the police believe it is? How much does his widow really know? One thing's for sure; if he doesn't enter the storm that grips Los Angeles - he'll never find out! Though if he does, he'd better be sure of himself - or he'll be dead!

"... the game has all the atmosphere of an old private eye movie" C+VG

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Interactive fiction -- a
science fiction story.

Version 1.1

Plasti-Pavement

The Plasti-Pavement beneath
your feet forms into a
east, west and north crossroads
here.

The entrance to Security-
Block 2 is before you, a small
slot in the wall beside it.
A Security-Cam floats above you

People push past you as they
rush off to their accommodation.

Your ID card flashes green
faintly for a moment.

Spectrum Screen Shown

A DARK SKY OVER PARADISE

What a way to enter MoonBase! You've travelled from Earth at a moments notice for some unspecified task, and now here you are, being interrogated in one of the Security Blocks! But it seems there's a good reason; the bombings have the authorities worried - they're looking for the leaders of the terrorists. You'd better get on with your work, and keep out of trouble! But can you?

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world of Joe Slater. Can you
ing in a psychopathic ins
origins of his burning vis
can you yourself remain s
In the second, you'll
psychic detective, Jules
attempt to unravel the m
coffin. In a story that sp
you'll have to solve the m
enging - and hugely ent
and questioning the many

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A Dark Sky Over Paradise



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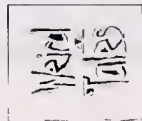
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LETTERS

A TOUCH OF NOSTALGIA

Almost every month there's some item or other in the Probe letters section which tempts me to write - and then something distracts me - and it gets put off, until eventually the next month's issue arrives and the same happens again... Anyway, this is a desperate attempt to make up a small part of the backlog! Perhaps I should start by saying "Hello again" to Tony Bridge, whose letter in the May issue brought me a warm glow of pleasure. It's odd how a single genre of computer game (which the uninitiated might see as coldly technological, and impersonal) should spawn its own brand of nostalgia in what has really been a remarkably short time. But there was certainly nothing cold or impersonal about Tony's old Adventure Corner in its heyday. I think Hugh Walker had it right when he once pointed out to me that the secret of the success of Tony's Corner was that it was OURS - or at least, it felt as if it was. One felt part of it. In those days, when adventures were developing at a rapid pace, and one could never predict what might turn up next, there was a strong sense of discovery and excitement shared with the Grand Elf and his followers. When something exciting did turn up (and it often did) the response would be immediate: write to the Elf about it! Anyway, I hope the Elf is reading this. I, along with so many others, owe him an enormous debt of gratitude for the pleasure he brought over the years, and also for the encouragement he offered when I tried my hand at writing adventures as well as playing them.

Perhaps I could also say a friendly "Hello again" to Mergo Porteous, who wrote in the June issue. I'm delighted that my article on the aim of adventuring struck a responsive chord or two. I'd have thought "The Golden Chalice" would have been well and truly buried and forgotten by now, but I admit to a certain fondness for it in a nostalgic sort of way. It was the first "big" adventure I wrote, and it was written with great enthusiasm but the barest minimum of programming skill! I remember having mixed feelings about publishing it (as a magazine listing) on the grounds that all the "expert programmers" who read the magazine would laugh themselves silly over its incompetence. What I didn't realise, of course, was that "expert programmers" were pretty rare, and probably didn't read the magazine anyway!

Finally, I'd like to say that I do admire the taste of Ann Potter who wrote in the May issue, and echo her plea for more gems from the pen of Hugh Walker. I have to admit here to an excess of bias, but the truth is the truth no matter who says it - and Hugh has a rare gift of clarity and wit which we don't see enough of. (May I have the ten pounds now, Hugh?) Enough. Cheers to one and all,

ALAN DAVIS, Brookhouse, Lancaster.

(Yes, Alan, Tony will read your letter. He likes the letters section. I too joined you in avidly reading the Adventure Corner back in those early days and can honestly say that, were it not for Grand Elf I wouldn't be editing Probe now. When Tony's Corner was dropped by PCW I wrote and told them they were mad and I was right - just look what happened to them! I am hoping to persuade Tony to come along to the Probe convention - how about it Tony?.....Mandy)

THE TRUTH BEHIND THE RUMOURS

I heard the rumour about Virgin Mastertronic buying the Infocom name from Mediagenic with a view to releasing all the titles across all formats? Here's a British company that really knows something about marketing and, let's face it, they couldn't do any worse than Mediagenic could they? Might this mean a revitalisation of Infocom and, perhaps, the tempting back of some of their legendary writers to

craft a few more masterpieces? It all sounds too good to be true doesn't it? And I'm sorry to say that that's just what it is. So, what are the facts? Well, on 15th August I spoke to Virgin Mastertronic's Managing Director, Nick Alexander, and this is what they said. The rumoured purchase of the Infocom name and rights to all the titles etc., is in reality nothing so dramatic. What they have done is to buy the licensing rights to five adventures - Zork I, Wishbringer, Planetfall, Lesther Goddesses of Phobos and Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy - which they intend to release as budget-priced adventures on the Virgin Mastertronic label. All 5 will be made available for the 16-bit machines, ST/Amiga/PC, and will retail at £7.99 for the ST/Amiga versions and £9.99 for the PC. They hope to have these on the market by the end of the year(!) but, as they're budget releases, the packaging won't be as lavish as Infocom's own. If these sell well then they may consider doing a licensing deal for some of the other titles - but don't hold your breath! Personally, I think they're unlikely to make much money out of this as it's still possible to pick up some of those early Infocom originals for £10 or so. But, if they run a big advertising campaign in the glossy magazines, they may well introduce new adventurers into the delights of Infocom and things could develop from there. Fingers crossed!

NEIL SHIPMAN, Coalpit Heath, Bristol.

(I do hope that things do develop and that this will eventually lead to the Infocom team getting together to bring us more delights in the future. I will be keeping my fingers crossed too..... Handy)

YOUTHFUL ENTHUSIASM

I have received my first issue of Probe magazine and I think it is the best Adventure Magazine around. I thought as I am new here I should introduce myself. My name is Jay Honosutomo and I am twelve years old. I own an Amstrad CPC464 computer (but soon I am upgrading to a 6128) and have only recently been interested in adventure games but I am sure I will be playing them for a long time to come. I do not have a very large collection of adventure games at the moment, but I am building my way up. The games I do have are Scapeghost, Gnome Ranger, Message from Andromeda, The Bards Tale (if anybody could help me to start off I would be very grateful), and Rigel's Revenge. Out of all my collection I have completed Scapeghost, Gnome Ranger (thanks to Mrs Joan Pancott for all of the help she gave me), and Message from Andromeda.

JAY HONOSUTOMO, Hemel Hempstead, Herts.

(It is always great to hear from a new, young adventurer, Jay. Welcome to Probe. I hope that your enthusiasm for adventuring never fades and that this absorbing interest will give you years of pleasure.... Handy)

PROBE ALL BOUND UP

I recently sent off to Amstrad Action for a couple of magazine binders after failing to find anything suitable in the local shops. The ones they sent work by means of a thin wire inserted along the centre pages of the magazine which is then clipped into the binder, they work very well. Inside each binder I found a card with the name and address of the manufacturer, so I immediately wrote off and asked if they had anything similar in Probes dimensions, 8 3/8" x 6". Their reply showed that they make two types in a range of sizes, the ones with wires described above (wirex) and ones with sprung cords instead of wires (cordex). I have since sent off for and received two of the Cordex type at £3.50 each plus postage and packing as charged at £1.75 for 1, £2.25 for 2, £3.25 for 3, 4 or 5, £3.50 for 6 or more, vat included.

Twelve copies of Probe fit nicely in each binder. If anyone else is interested the company is: Modern Bookbinders Ltd., Chadwick Street, Blackburn, Lancs, BB2 4AG. Tel: 0254 59371.

JOHN YATES, Rochdale, Lancs.

=====

A READER RECOMMENDS

I have managed to find some of the games I am looking for already through the ads in Probe (bless it) and lots from a firm called Capri Marketing Ltd. They have stacks of old adventure games in stock. If anyone sends a list in of their requirements they'll try to find them amongst their main shop in Marlow or five others in the chain and will even reserve them if you can't afford them all at once (like me!). They cover all 8 bit formats and have Infocom games for the Commodore (Suspended, Hulk, Deadline, Zork III) at £3.99 each! Souls of Darkon, Twin Kingdom Valley, Jewels of Babylon, Heroes of Karn etc at 99p each. Their address is: Capri Marketing, Computer Cavern, 9 Dean Street, Marlow, Bucks, SL7 3AA.

MARK ELTRINGHAM, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich.

=====

MAP READER WANTED

I would like to talk to you about the forthcoming convention. I am afraid that I am one of the terribly mistrustful women that refuse to travel alone. I thought I would drop you a line to let you know what I was prepared to do if I could find somebody to help me out. I have a car, but my sense of direction is totally useless, so I am prepared to offer someone else a lift in return for their map reading skills! I will also (gladly) accept a lift from someone else, and in return I will pay for petrol. If this is still not suitable I would willingly travel on the train with a fellow adventurer - perhaps we could meet on the station platform, wearing carnations in our buttonholes! If anyone in or around the Sheffield area is willing to help me out, I would be most grateful. My telephone number is 0742 346730 and I am available after 6pm weekdays, and most times at the weekends, although not too early!

I am thinking of buying an ST (especially as this rotten computer has crashed on me halfway through this letter and I've had to re-load the program). This may seem to have no relevance to the letter, but read on! I have received a catalogue for both the Amiga and the ST from a retailer, and as well as selling hardware, they have an excellent stock of RPG's and some adventures for both these computers, at fairly reasonable prices. They especially have quite a few Infocom titles, for example, for the ST they stock Ballyhoo, Cutthroats, Hollywood Hi-jinx, Moonmist, Plundered Hearts, Seastalker and Trinity. If you write to them, saying that you own one of these computers they will quickly sent you a current catalogue, and place you free of charge on their mailing list, if you wish. You can get the catalogue from: Silica Shop Ltd, 1-4 The Mawe, Netherly Road, Sidcup, Kent, DA14 4DX.

I am keen for Bob Adams to write an article on Modems. I nearly bought one last year - but never quite got around to it! I still intend to buy one, but I am a little unsure as to how expensive it is to install and to use, so I would definitely welcome any information.

JILL CARTER, 280 Burgoyne Rd, Walkley, Sheffield, S8 3QF

=====

A SATISFIED CUSTOMER

Everybody moans about mail order Software/Hardware companies ripping people off but not many give praise to them when it's deserved. Well, here's a company that I consider to be the best around at the moment, it is called The Mail Centa in Belper, Derby. We bought our first Atari 520ST from them plus the printer and monitor and for £5 they do a next day courier service. When we bought it, after about six months

The mouse became defective, so I phoned the Proprietor, Martin Bridges, and he told me to return the mouse and he'd send a replacement. A new mouse arrived the following day and I hadn't even sent the broken one back! When we upgraded to the 1040 STE they gave me £250 back trade in on the 520ST despite the fact it was over 12 months old. So in effect we ended up renting the 520ST for just over £100. If you or any of the "Probians" are about to upgrade then I suggest they buy one of his packs as there are a lot of extra's thrown in for the same price as an ordinary ST.

JOHN COX, Newmarket, Suffolk.

=====

COLLECTORS ITEMS?

In recent issues there has been much debate over selling or keeping old games. Here is a different angle on the subject. The software industry is ten years young and at present is still growing up. The games we have bought over the past decade are part of the industries childhood and, as such, could become very valuable as snapshots of the past. I base my assumptions on the vast prices obtained for early and rare records. Adventures, along with simulators, are perhaps more collectable due to the general low sales they achieve and to the high quality of packaging, manuals etc. Perhaps other collectables would be ZX80/81 games, Microdrive games, Lynx/Enterprise/Oric games, early Scott Adams games, the list is endless. Anyway, enough of this mercenary talk. Should you take out lovingly cared for games in ten years time and people fall about laughing, you'll still have part of your past and all the joy of remembering the bugs in the Hobbit. (All 23,000 of them).

STEVE CLAY, Eileanore Port, S Wirral.

=====

IT JUST ISN'T WORTH THE EFFORT

Thought I should let you know how things stand. Following appalling recent sales (although in the end MAGIC only did a bit worse than expected), and bearing in mind the BBC readership percentage of Probe. I feel it would be a complete waste of money. Sales of the REMIX have been absolutely nothing short of an insult, and to put it as simply as possible, if no-one can give a toss then why should I bother? Therefore I announce my certain retirement from the BBC, and the way things stand, any possibilities of the enhanced REMIX that were on the cards for the C64 are very slim indeed. There is no longer any pleasure to be derived from writing the games. I guess that I have been anubbed a couple of times too many: kind remarks on a game do not pay the bills!

SIMON MAREN, Tamworth, Staffs.

=====

MEMORIES OF AN EX ADVENTURE WRITER

In 1989, I released a Spectrum adventure called THE MENAGERIE myself due to the increasing apathy of budget software houses to adventures. To hopefully help sales, I tried various means locally in addition to submitting copies to the usual computer monthlies. Despite reviews in all but Your Sinclair, advertising in Probe and selling to work colleagues at reduced prices, I sold 32 copies. As I had quite a lot of material for another, I started BOG OF BRIT. I have promoted it similarly to THE MENAGERIE, advertised in Probe and had, in my opinion, a favourable review by the experienced Alf Bladwin. During the past two months I have sold 9 copies of my game to Probe readers. To those people say I take this opportunity to offer my thanks for their support. Considering that I understand Probe has over 300 readers with Spectrum computers, can someone explain why my efforts only reached 3% of you and why a review in Sinclair User with its vast readership generated 4 sales. Over recent years there has been

numerous articles regarding the demise of the adventure market. Tony Bridgman and now Keith Campbell have had to make way for arcade reviews. Level 9 and others have now departed. During 1990, Probe has reviewed 9 Spectrum games of which 5 were by Zenobi (55%). Without the support and promotion of Zenobi, what would their sales have been? Would they have been reviewed by such as Mike Gerrard? Would they have attempted to write another? Well established software houses now have well established groups of people ready to purchase their latest offering. A special offer coupon in Your Sinclair is capable of generating vast sales. But what of the rest of us? The adventure writers that I know do so because initially they liked playing adventures and felt they were able to do one as well as good. They knew they would not make a fortune but hoped to at least break even. A favourable review and response was our goal.

For those who have never attempted to write their own game, these are a few relevant points. It usually takes months of preparation. Then weeks of inputting and saving your database. Then the playtesters find the things that should not be there. Eventually it is complete. Then you need cassette sticks, inlays, blank cassettes, jiffy bags, stamps etc. Copies then have to be sent to anyone remotely connected with adventures in the hope of a good review.

But what do we do if the response borders on the pathetic? Do we say never mind and devote more time, effort and money or do we call it a day? As far as I'm concerned if people won't want my games, fair enough, I don't waste my time further. So please, no more articles stating that adventures are not dead or even dying because, myself and a few others know otherwise. Something to ponder though. If you don't support adventure writers when we are here, will you miss them when they are gone and all you've got to choose from is a Zenobi game.

IAN BROWN, Glen Perve, Leicester.

=====

GRUE! DISMAYED

It is with dismay that I read in the last issue of Probe (News Section - Ed) that three home-producers of adventures are thinking of giving up writing any further games. I now know of possibly one more - Jim McBrayna. Jim has just finished his latest game THE MISSION and has tried to get this one marketed as a commercial product. Unlike his others which were PD, I have enclosed a copy of the reply from the software distributors who are setting up this Amiga only label. Readers can draw their own conclusions from the reply? Meanwhile THE MISSION remains finished and unobtainable for the moment anyway but we are working on it, watch this space..... As for the other three home-producers, I do sympathise with them and if their games were out on Amiga format I would be able to buy their games. Don't give up, without people like yourselves and Jim it won't take long for adventures to bite the dust completely!

THE GRUE! Ormskirk, W Lencs.

Dear Jim,
Thanks for your letter and preview of THE MISSION. Regarding the distribution of THE MISSION, yes we are interested and it is possible we could release it on our label, but there are a few points that need to be discussed. Firstly, and the most important point, is that there is no way we could risk releasing it as a text only adventure, we'd HAVE to add graphics. As an adventure die-hard this may make you scree (Jim isn't the only one to feel like screaming - Ed), but a text only game nowadays would be too great a risk. So we'd have to get Rico Holmes to do some graphics - nice screens for the major locations and perhaps smaller graphics for each room and objects; The inventory screen could contain a simple picture of everything you are carrying. Of course there would be an option to turn the graphics off. (Sigh!-

Ed) As you probably read in the Update, the label is going to be Amiga only, and we want the buying public and Amiga owners to be able to spot this straight away, some astounding graphics from Rico would obviously do the trick, and so would some atmospheric music and samples. An obvious theme tune to be played while loading, samples such as doors creaking etc have been used in almost every game, so we would have to expand on this and try to incorporate as many as possible, as with the graphics there would be the option to turn SFX off if you wish to play the game as a standard adventure. Because you have two very good adventures in the Public Domain, you would have to make sure THE MISSION was much better than your previous games, obviously the cosmetic enhancements will help, but the actual adventure itself has to be an improvement. The last thing we want is for ACE to say "it's good but for a better buy get THE HOLY GRAIL for £2.50"!

17 BIT SOFTWARE, Wakefield.

(I can't often that your editor is lost for words but when I read this letter I nearly fell over my bottom lip! I certainly don't need graphics and sound effects to enhance my own vivid imagination. On the contrary, I can well imagine the creaking of a rusty door as it groans open while I am exploring dusty, ancient rooms by the aid of a flickering torch and it would only take the high pitched, tinny squeak beeping out of my computer to bring me back down to earth with a thump! The idea of cutting out huge chunks of an excellent adventure in order to provide memory space for pretty pictures and jolly jingles is criminal! Produce the adventure yourself, Jim, and let us decide if it needs tunes and pictures for ourselves!.....Nandy)
=====

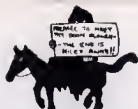
THESE PEOPLE DESERVE OUR SUPPORT!

I can't believe it, in the August issue of Probe, quote "I have heard from no less than THREE home-brew producers this month who all tell me that they are seriously thinking of giving up writing games". Oh c'mon! don't say that, at a time when we are fighting to save adventure games, never mind B bits, do I believe what I hear? We must buy these games! I've said it before and I'll say it again, if we don't support people like these then we are cutting our own throats, adventuring will die, B bits will die, Probe, Spellbreaker, every single thing to do with adventuring will die. These people write and produce games to please us, now we must help to please them by buying and supporting their efforts. I don't care what machine they cover, MSX, Oric, Spectrum, CPC, BBC, etc, whatever. I know three writers might not seem like many but before the rot sets in and things get out of hand we must put a stop to it. These people deserve more. It's ***** hard work producing a game and a couple of quid won't break the bank. I don't know the writers in question apart from Ian Brown who wrote BOG OF BRIT (a very enjoyable game) but if I find out I haven't bought any of the other two then I surely will. Writers can let me know if they want. If you think I am a bit peeved, you are right. We have to support these people to continue enjoying adventures and to be sure that we don't become part of the downfall of an already rare species. So c'mon one and all, buy them before it's too late. Give them the support they need. We all must have a conscience about this!

JIM STRUTHERS, Blyth, Northumberland.

(I couldn't agree with you more, Jim. It isn't an easy decision to launch out on your own and market your own games. It would be a darn sight easier if advertising prices in the glossies weren't so high and if it were easier to get these games reviewed in them to gain the notice of a wider audience.....Nandy)

HELP WANTED



"I am stuck on THE GUILD OF THIEVES. I hate to cry "foul" and deep down I don't think I have a bugged version because no one else seems to have had the same problem. I can't open the door marked "Private". I have the ivory key but it makes no difference. Whatever I try - I.e. open door; unlock door with ivory key; hit door - I get the reply "you can't do that to the office door". I have well over 300 points and I'm just wondering whether I have something or done something that precludes entry or if indeed there is some other prerequisite before the door can be opened. By the way, if the ivory key does in fact unlock the door why doesn't the game say that there is a keyhole or that the door is locked when you try to examine/open it?! Please can somebody help me."

MAREE WALSHE, 55 Wairoonga Cres, Greenborough, Victoria 3088, Australia.

"Please can anyone help me with SPELDOME ADVENTURE (Artic/Tynsoft) or SKOOL TIMES (Hektic Software), I am desperate!"

BEN ISBA, 11 South Rd, Bowdon, Cheshire, WA14 2JZ

"In PENDANT OF LOGRYN how do I get the arrow which is stuck high in a tree. I've tried climbing it but no luck. Where do I find the rat's skull? Also in part 2 of AGATHA'S FOLLY, how do I find healing solution for skin. I've tried soothing laavas and a couple of other things but nothing seems to work. Please can someone help?"

SHEILA SIMPSON, 26 Sir William Turner Ct, Kirkleatham, Redcar, Cleveland.

"I would be eternally grateful if someone could help me as I am stuck in KNIGHT ORC (Level 91. I have sent for their help sheet, but I still can't seem to finish the game! Is it really that complicated, or am I just thick? Answer on a postcard please....."

JILL CARTER, 280 Burgoyne Rd, Walkley, Sheffield, S6 3QF.

PERSONAL COLUMN

"Could you please print a big THANK YOU to John Wilson of Zenobi Software for supplying me with a copy of Agatha's Folly. John read of its demise in Probe and last Monday a new copy arrived on my mat, totally unexpected"..... SHEILA SIMPSON

"Please could I send thanks via Probe to Sue Medley for help in getting PC versions of Arthur and Zork Zero going. Also SYNTAX has successfully completed a year and goes from strength to strength. With maps as well as solutions it really is something!"
P.S. "Bob Adams was just slandering me! I do have a clue as to how to use a modem but as my son bought it and I have no interest in wasting money I have not bothered with it....".....TERRY ROBERTS

"Please could I say "Hello" to the Grue! and thank him for his help. Also tell him that I have reported him to the RSPCA (The Royal Society for the Protection of Airplants)".....JILL CARTER



SPECTRUM software for sale: For 48K - EL DORADO, SPIDERMAN (from Marvel Comics), LOADS OF MIDNIGHT, BOOK OF THE DEAD. For 128K - WEAVER OF HER DREAMS £4 for all plus 2 48K's free.

SPECTRUM software wanted: GNDME RANGER, INGRID'S BACK please write with price required to:

SHEILA SIMPSON, 26 Sir William Turner Ct, Kirkleatham, Redcar, Cleveland.

AMSTRAD CPC software wanted: ADVENTURELAND, ASHKERON, BEER HUNTER, BESTIARY, BUGSY, CASTLE DRACULA, CASTLE BLACKSTAR, CASTLE OF SKULL LORD, CIRCUS, CURSED BE THE CITY, DIARY OF ADRIAN MOLE, DIE YDU VICIOUS FISH, ODDGY GEEZERS, ENCHANTER, FEDERATION, HITCHHIKERS GUIDE TO THE GALAXY, INCA CURSE, INVINCIBLE ISLAND, ISLAND OF RIDDLES, KNIGHT ORC, MAGICIANS BALL, MAGIC SWORD, MICROMAN, MISSION ONE, MONSTERS OF MURDOCK, NYTHYHEL, NOVA/HAUNTED HOUSE, NORTH SEA BULLION ADVENTURE, OLD SCORES, PLANET OF DEATH, ROBIN OF SHERLOCK, RICK HANSEN, SECRET OF ST BRIDES, SNOW QUEEN, SPY TREK, STATIONFALL, SMUGGLERS COVE, SHADOW OF THE BEAR, VERY BIG CAVE ADVENTURE, VIDEO WORLD and WOLFMAN. Also does anyone have a half decent map of MINDFIGHTER for the price of a photocopy.

MARK ELTRINGHAM, 38 Gargie Hill, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich, NR7 5XX
Telephone: 0628 891101

AMSTRAD CPC 6128 software for sale: On disc - TIME AND MAGIC, GIANT KILLER (Topologika), YES CHANCELLOR (Topologika) £5 each.

TERRY ROBERTS, B Whinney Lane, Harrogate, N Yorks, HG2 5LT
Telephone: 0423 524109

SPECTRUM 48K software wanted: CASTLE COLOITZ, INSPECTOR FLUKEIT, THE LIMEHOUSE MYSTERY, FISTFULL OF BLOOD CAPSULES.

AMSTRAD CPC464 software for sale: MESSAGE FROM ANDROMEDAS, HEROES OF KARN, JEWELS OF BABYLON £6 for the three inclusive of postage etc.

FOR ARRANGEMENT - MSX software: CASTLE BLACKSTAR, CASTLE DRACULA, JEWELS OF DARKNESS, THE HOBBIT, SHADOW OF THE BEAR, EMERALD ISLE and VERA CRUZ. Anyone wanting these MSX adventures please drop me a line and we can come to a very cheap arrangement so I can dispose of thee.

JIM STRUTHERS, 112 Disraeli St, Cowpen Quay, Blyth, Northumberland.

FOR SALE: The complete set of ACL dossiers. Nos 1 to 38. Worth £40. Plus Adventurer's Club reference book, fully updated to late summer 1990. A wealth of information including reviews of 248 adventures, solutions to 33 and much more. An adventuring history from 1885 to present day. Only £20 including postage.

PAUL CARDIN, 3 Lonsdale Villas, Wallasey, Merseyside, L45 4PG

AMSTRAD PCW software wanted: HOLLYWOOD HI-JINX, SEASTALKER, STARCROSS, CUTTHROATS, SUSPECT, WITNESS, ZORK III, BUREAUCRACY, SPELLBREAKER, SORCERER, will swap for other PCW programs.

BBC software for sale/exchange: On disc - NOT A PENNY MORE NOT A PENNY LESS £6. G.A.C. £5. ADVENTURESCAPE (2 discs - utility and sample games) £8. On tape - LORD OF THE RINGS £4.50. ERIK THE VIKING £3.50.

COMMODORE 64 software for sale/exchange: Disk - DEADLINE, ZORK III, STARCROSS, MOONMIST, LURKING HORROR £6 each. SUSPENDED (no manual) £4. BORROWED TIME £4.50. On tape - RETURN TO EDEN £2.50. MINDFIGHTER £4.50. NIGHTMARE £1.50. MURDER ON THE ATLANTIC £5. VALHALLA £2.50. HAMPSHIRE £2.50. KILLED UNTIL DEAD £2.00. THE QUILL AND THE ILLUSTRATOR (no manual) both for £4. INFIDEL INVICIBLES BOOK: (still sealed) £3.50. Please write to:

STEVE BIRTLES, 28 Grosvenor St, Prestwich, Manchester, M25 5ES

COMMODORE 64 software wanted on tape: JEWELS OF DARKNESS (Level 9) and KNIGHT DRC (Level 9). Please write with price required to:

JOE MODRE, 45 Linka Ave, Aebie, Morpeth, NESS ORZ

FOR SALE: My complete INFOCOM collection, including Infocoeica, lovingly cared for. Also the complete collection of The New York Times and Status Line, all this could be yours for only \$7.5 million! But if any Probe reader going to the convention who could bring along the Boon Man from Mediagenic and then perform a ritual disembowelling upon him, would of course be offered this once in a lifetime offer at a considerably reduced price!

THE GRUE! Addressee on helpline page of Probe.

INFOCOM SWOP 'N BUY

These adventures are accepted on the understanding they are ORIGINAL and with all packaging, and advertised for one month only. No responsibility can be accepted by either Probe or Nic Rumaay for any which are either copies or damaged. It is up to the individual to check that the swop will run on their machine (please note that the majority of Infocoms will run on either 6128 or PCW, but a few early ones are machine dedicated). Lists are sent on a SAE basis only.

THIS MONTH:

Terpos Vasilie, 14 Archermoy Str., 116 32 Athens, Greece, would like to swap BALLYHOO, CUTTHROATS, HITCHHIKERS GUIDE TO THE GALAXY, LEATHER GODDESSES, MOONMIST, STATIONFALL, WISHBRINGER, WITNESS and ZORK I. Looking for any Amstrad version other than these, please write first before sending.

A-MAZE-ING ESCAPES

By JOAN FANCOTT played on Amstrad

KINGDOM OF HAMIL

Forest Near Field. Check that you still have the talisman, save your position and then one move at a time use the following route through the Enchanted Maize. The directions in brackets will take you back to the previous location if you have dropped the talisman.

W (w), E (n), SE (ne), SW (nw), W (nw), SE (ne, w), E (ne), get PAINTING, E (se,e), NE (sw, w), N (e, se), W to Forest near Field.

LEATHER GODDESSES OF PHOBOS

Catacombs. NW, n, ne, e, clap, hop, ne, ne, clap, say "kweepa", se, d, clap, hop, nw, ne, n, clap, hop, say "kweepa", s, ne, clap, up, nw to Forgotten Storeroom, get CLEVELAND TELEPHONE DIRECTORY, clap, hop, say "kweepa", nw, s, clap, se, se, d, clap, hop, say "kweepa", ne, w, clap, e, w, sw, clap, hop, say "kweepa", sw to Burial Chamber, get raft, clap, n, ne, e, clap, hop, nw, n, up Laundry Room.

ADVENTURES: DEAD OR ALIVE?

by

Alan Davis



In an article in the May 1990 issue of "Adventure Probe" ("The Puzzled Adventurer") I took as my starting point a letter by Jim Struthers published in the previous February issue. Jim's letter was both interesting and controversial, and I'd like to take up, here, another of his comments as a starter for discussion. Basically, Jim objects to the inclusion of character interaction in adventures and explains why:

"With character interaction, you tend to spend too much time typing in commands only to be rewarded by stupid, trivial, or completely irrelevant responses. Who needs it?"

Who, indeed? What Jim describes does seem to be a waste of the programmer's time, the computer's memory, and the player's patience. Does this mean, then, that the attempt to include character interaction in adventures should simply be abandoned - as something which seemed like a good idea but didn't work in practice? Well, maybe yes - and maybe no. It all depends on what you want from your adventuring. If it's the puzzles you're after (as in Jim's case) then of course character interaction can only be a distraction. But if you want more from your adventuring than puzzle-solving (and to judge from responses to my previous article "The Puzzled Adventurer" there are at least a few of us among the Adventure Probe readership who do) then the situation isn't so simple. Let me explain further.

A few years ago I wrote a series of articles for ZX Computing Monthly called "Realms of Interaction", which looked at character interaction essentially from the programming point of view. However, I did attempt at the outset to explain why it might be a good idea to do this (at least in principle) - and I've had no reason to change my mind since. The argument was based on a simple example of an everyday adventuring experience, and went something like this:

You're wandering around this mysterious underground system of caverns (cave), and the adventure is so well written that the illusion of actually being there is very strong. You just can't wait to find out what's around the next corner, so here we go and whoope.... A troll blocks your path. Right, hit it with the sword. "You can't". OK, give it the gold coin. "You can't". Oh. Try talking to it. "You can't". And slowly but surely the illusion of "being there" is destroyed. This isn't a troll at all. It's just a puzzle, placed there by the programmer for one specific purpose.

Of course, I'm aware that I've taken the worst case as an example. Thoughtful programming can go some way towards alleviating the problem by providing suitably varied responses, so that we might have a sequence something like this:

Hit it with the sword. "The troll deflects your blow with ease." Give it the coin. "The troll rejects your offer with a growl." Talk to it. "It ignores you."

Well, this does help quite a bit. But the fact remains that these are all negative responses: eventually we begin to see through them, and lose the sense of "being there" yet again. And you know, if we were really standing in this tunnel faced with a troll, would it really just stand there patiently doing nothing? I don't think so....

I'm the first to admit that this has nothing to do with puzzle-solving. It makes no difference at all to the puzzle whether the troll growls, paces around, or approaches you with menacing snarls in between your own actions. But it makes a colossal difference to the realism; to the atmosphere; to the illusion of "being there". And notice that here I'm only discussing independent character action on a very lowly scale - the sort of thing that could easily be done even with the old "Quill", years ago. I haven't begun to discuss more intricate character behaviour yet.

Look at the situation in another way. The one adventure we all wanted, right from the start, was "Lord of the Rings". Now, forget the Melbourne House travesty as it really was. Try to imagine, instead, the adventure that you wish it had been, but try to imagine it without character interaction. It's impossible, isn't it? No matter how hard you try, you can't do it. Oh, sure, you can imagine a "traditional" type of adventure set in Middle Earth readily enough. But it wouldn't be "Lord of the Rings", would it? What would be the point of it all if you couldn't have a chat with Merry and Pippin? Or if you couldn't smoke a bowlful of pipeweed with Gandalf when you felt inclined? Or if, when you arrived at Lothlorien, Galadriel turned out just to be part of the scenery?

The point is this. Adventuring in its richest sense of exploring strange and exciting places and doing strange and exciting things (as epitomised in our imaginary "Lord of the Rings" game) simply can't be done in a vacuum. Character interaction shouldn't be seen as just some sort of interesting (or regrettable, depending on your point of view) extension to the traditional game - which I suspect is how most players and programmers have approached it. On the contrary, it should be built in as part of the essential core of a game from the outset. It's a tall order, naturally. To the best of my knowledge, no one has so far managed to get the balance right - though I think there have been a few good tries and near misses.

Theory, of course, is one thing, and practice is another - and in practice there are many restraints on the programmer which will always limit what he can do. But this is no reason, in my view, for abandoning the whole idea of character interaction. There is a great source of gameplay richness here which so far has hardly been tapped, and the advent of PAW in recent years has put a very powerful tool in the hands of programmers. I doubt if truly great, epic interactive adventures can be written using PAW (powerful though it is, there's a limit to its flexibility), but I have no doubt at all that games which go beyond the interactive level of, say, "The Hobbit" can in principle be written using it. I've been threatening to try this myself ever since I first encountered PAW, but it's one of those things - you know - that you never quite get around to. Well maybe things are changing. For the last few weeks a suitable plot has been slumbering, and the challenge of trying to write an adventure which incorporates intelligent interaction with characters yet which is not a source of mere irritation to the puzzle solver is quite an alluring one. Don't hold your breath, but it's possible that Dave may, in due course, put his money where his mouth is. Watch this space....

HOW DID IT ALL BEGIN

P G Clark.

Back in the dim and distant days of yore, when even young grues were unaware of the existence of the Great Infocom, a wise wizard by the name of Uncle Clive was beavering away in a monastic cell in the deep dark depths of Cambridge, city of magic and bicycles. Then, one wild and windy day, the door to the cell creaked open and Uncle Clive rushed out crying Eureka!! You could be excused at this point in the narrative for thinking that the great man has been run over by a CS which was a popular form of travel in those giddy days, but that was not the case. In fact he had just produced the prototype of what was soon to change the way of life for many small boys, not to mention their fathers. It was the birthday of the ZX81.

At that time I had been married for some years and had a family of three children including one of those small boys. Cash was not exactly growing on trees at that time, it still isn't, so the immediate purchase of such delights as a computer was out of the question. However, a friend of mine had one so I was able to get my hands on it at odd times. That was how it remained until the day I saw one in the window of the local second-hand shop.

I still remember the elation as the first flickering characters appeared on the family television screen. It came complete with leads and a 16K Ram Pack which was fixed on the back with elastic bands and Blu-Tack to prevent what was the scourge of the ZX81...Ram Pack Wobble!! The kids of today don't know what they're missing! Anyway, much time was spent on such "state of the art" games as Space Invaders and Galaxians. This type of game together with the type-ins from magazines which were now beginning to appear on the shelves of newsagents were all that was available. Then, one day, a friend lent me his copy of an adventure. I cannot now remember just what it was called, but I spent many evenings battling against huge odds until the first Balrog that I had ever encountered was defeated in the middle of the swamp and the treasure was mine.

As time passed the ZX81 became a Spectrum and, with the advent of colour, more and better arcade games became the norm although Planet of Death and Knights Quest proved to be a challenge. Suddenly there was seen a blinding flash of light and amidst a fanfare of trumpets there was The Hobbit. Who would have imagined that such a program was possible. Imagine being able to talk to the characters and have them reply, even if all Thorin did was to sit down and sing about gold and trying to talk to Gandalf always seemed to drive him from the room. There then followed Lords of Midnight and Valhalla. Things were really looking up.

A sudden rush of blood to the head a while later provoked the purchase of an Amstrad 464 which was exchanged for the 6128 just as soon as it hit the High Street shops. Disc software at last. Fast loading and no more "Read Error B". Now the extra graphical capability and improved sound stimulated the old interest in arcade games.

A few years later and small son is now not so small and sits mumbling strange hex numbers over his Assembler/Monitor or composing musical compositions with the Advanced Music System. All arcade games begin to look the same. Am I getting old?? (That's a rhetorical question). OK it means I dont want an answer, alright?

One evening while browsing through a box of old discs, I came across Return to Eden. My son had bought this many moons ago and we had started to map our way through but had never got anywhere near completing it. I decided to start again from scratch and this time made up my mind to finish it. Two evenings later guess who was totally stuck. A while spent thumbing through a pile of old Amstrad Actions provided enough clues to keep me busy for another evening or two before becoming stuck again. Now, what do I do? Give up or look through the list of names in the adventure column for help. I decided on the latter course of action and came up with a lady by the name of Joan who lives in Weymouth. How nice to talk to someone so friendly and helpful. Yes..she knew how to help me out of my current problem and also gave me much encouragement to continue adventuring. She also told me about Adventure Probe and where to buy it. (That should get you some commission Joan')

That was nearly a year ago now and many adventures had come and gone through the old 6128 since then. Joan has helped me with most of them. I now thoroughly enjoy Adventure Probe and, in the few months that I have been a subscriber, I feel that I am beginning to know those people who contribute to it.

I sometimes look back and wonder...How did it all begin?? I suppose that the only answer is.."By accident", but it does go to show that some accidents are very lucky.

FISHING FOR RED HERRINGS

NOVA

By JOAN PANCOTT played on Amstrad
Compass, Food Pack, Grenades, Knife, Moonrock, Nuclear Borer, Silver
Identcard, Skinsheet, Spanner, Toolbox.

MYSTERY OF THE INDUS VALLEY

By JOAN PANCOTT played on Amstrad
Bottle of Rua, Candle, Coffee Pot, Flask, Flint, Food, Haversack,
Ladder, Needle, Parcheents (Large and Small), Rifle, Thread.

DRAGON SLAYER

By VICKY JACKSON played on Spectrum
PART ONE: Toadstall, Shield, Heleet, Key, Crossbow. PART TWO: Mirror,
China Plate, Flintstone, Stick, Silver Vase. PART THREE: Cabbage, Lute.

SECRET OF 'LITTLE HODCOME

By VICKY JACKSON played on Spectrue
Piece of paper, Pistol, Pine Cone, Rat.



BUGS AND AMUSING RESPONSES

STARSHIP QUEST PT 2

By OLANE RICE played on Spectrum

Having loaded my items from part one into part two I checked the contents of my sack and found, along with everything else, that I had "A girl with her foot trapped in the roots of a birdcage tree". Not wanting to carry her around and being of a tidy nature I threw her in the boat. Thus it came as no surprise when, finding her later in the place where she was supposed to be, and inputting "Examine girl" the reply came back "She seems to be terrified of you"!

ORIFICE FROM OUTER SPACE

By JOHN YATES

In this game it seemed that a rocking stone platform needed tilting in some manner to get what was underneath. The most obvious solution was to get "the heavy rock cake" and drop it on the platform. After phoning just about every likely adventurer without success, Jim (Mr Adventure) Struthers confirmed that this was indeed the solution to the problem, but even after dropping everything else I was carrying, the blasted cake refused to be picked up. On a whim, I restarted the game and then tried the rock cake problem at the earliest opportunity. This time, after dropping everything else, the cake was successfully "got" and had the required influence on said platform. If this isn't a bug, the difference between the first and second attempt at cake hefting was lost on me!

ADVENTURESOF GAMES

By ALLAN PHILLIPS

I think there is a bug in three Adventuresoft games. In SAVAGE ISLAND pt 2 (ZX version) the game does not accept that you have closed your eyes, even though this has to be done to get any further. Same game but on the C64 will not accept sniffing a flower. In the C64 version of ARROW OF DEATH 2, there is a creature to be killed but kill/attack creature/monster/animal/foe etc is not accepted!

PAWNS OF WAR

By JIM STRUTHERS

I have discovered another interesting inventory! When I checked the response was "You are carrying, A cloth cap on a desk, A cloth cap and you are wearing a mesh grille. (ouch!..Ed)

THOSE WE HAVE LOVED

By STEVE CLAY (inspired by TEO BUGLERS famous phrases from issue 7).

LAST THOUGHTS

"I bet that 2000volt sign is a read herring!"

"What's that for?"

"What does UXB mean?"

"BEWARE OF THE DRAGON? What dragon?!"

"AHA! You must have to light the dynamite with the petrol and matches"

LAST WORDS

"Kill Dragon with penknife"

"Use Teleport"

"Jump across snake pit"

"Kick the Orc"

Drop the high explosive"

RESPONSES

Ramsave : "I can't see a ram to save"

Ramload : "What shall I load it on to?"

Say to Orc, Open safe with crowbar and blowtorch : "I don't know the word say" (This works on all inputs over four words long!)

Open door : "With what?"

Open door with key : "Which key?"

Open door with brass key: "You haven't got the brass key!"(Arrrrghhh!)

GETTING YOU STARTED



TRACER SANCTION

By THE GRUE! played on Comeadore 128

TALK TO MAN - BUY CHART FROM WOMAN - BUY FUEL TO GO TO SONEX - GO TO SHIP - GET SUIT - GET JETPACK - TURN POINTER TO SONEX - PUSH BUTTON - GO WEST OFF THE STREET - KNOCK AT DOOR - GO EAST OFF THE STREET TO JEWELLER'S - SELL GEM - GO TO OPTAGRAPH - CUT LINE - GO TO JUBILEX....

ESSEX

By GRUE! played on Amiga

GET NEWSPAPER - ENTER SHUTTLE - GET PAPERS - GO TO LOCKER ROOM - GET UNIFORM - GET COMLOCK - WEAR UNIFORM - GO TO SECURITY DESK - ASK ENSIGN TO TUNE COMLOCK - WHEN THE ENGINES FAIL GO TO GREENSPACE DECK - EXAMINE FOUNTAIN - GET COMMUNICATOR - GO TO TELEPORT ROOM AND TELEPORT YOURSELF TO THE PLANET.....

THE QUEST FOR THE HOLY GRAIL

By JIM STRUTHERS played on Spectrum

GET KEY - GET LAMP - LIGHT LAMP - W - S - E - E - N - E - N - E - N - N - W - W - GET SPADE - E - N - S - E - GET GLOVE - S - E - N - E - S - DIG - GET GRENADE - N - W - S - S - S - E - N - E - S - GET WEDGE - N - W - S - W - N - W - S - W - UNLOCK DOOR - OPEN DOOR - N - W - N - E - GET SHRUBBERY.....

SCAPEGHOST

By JAY HONOSUTDMO played on Amstrad CPC 464

GO TO THISTLEDOWN - GET THISTLEDOWN - GO TO MATCHBOOK - GET MATCHBOOK - GO TO PEBBLE - GET PEBBLE - GO TO WHITE CARD - GET WHITE CARD - GO TO TWIG - GET TWIG - GO TO MY GRAVE - WAIT and keep on WAITING until the message "Twilight gives way to darkness" appears - WAIT - FOLLOW JOE - WAIT - EDNA, HELLO - DAVID, HELLO - WAIT - COLONEL, HELLO - VIOLET, HELLO - EDITH, HELLO - WAIT - JDE, FOLLOW ME - GO TO DOG - STROKE DOG - N - STROKE DOG - STROKE DOG - GET FISH BONE.....

DRAGON WARS

By H.DIXON played on Comeadore 64

Getting out of Purgatory is not as hard as it first seems - work your way down south, on the mid-south tip of Purgatory there you will discover a very bad smell of corpses and the like, you will be told to read the instruction book for further info - use your dexterity abilities to escape. Before you escape, explore Purgatory well - there is a shop where you can get LOW MAGIC free of charge. Also enter the Arena, you will be supplied with weapons. When you do get out you will find yourself just outside a Slave Camp. There is a Magic Pool in the area which will heal all your wounds. Enter the Slave Camp - there is a Wizard to visit, a Sick Man and don't forget to visit the Campfire. Many items can be picked up in Slave Camp, and a non-player character will offer to join your band (one of these can also be picked up in Purgatory).....

CAVE CAPERS

By JIM STRUTHERS played on Amstrad

N - OPEN CHEST - GET MONEY - EXAM BLOKE - EXAM GOWN - N - GIVE MONEY TO DWARF - EXAM WALLS - E - PUSH SLAB - GET KEY - W - N - EXAM SIGN - GET COIN - E - E - KILL BATS WITH SWORD - GET BAT - E - EIGHT - E - UP - N - CLIMB ROPE - N - CLIMB IN BOAT - UNTIE ROPE - N - UP - UP - PUT COIN IN CAVITY.....

HINTS AND TIPS

VALKYRIE 17

By JIM STRUTHERS played on Spectrum

To look through the telescope, take the ring from the lemonade can and insert it, then turn telescope.

Read the book to learn about skiing.

Kill the girl and hide the body (a dastardly deed!)

Carry a piece of lamb to dispose of the rats!

To avoid detection, spray the camera lens.

Shoot the guards!



GNOME RANGER

By JAY HONOSUTOMO played on Aastrad CPC464

PART 11. To make weedkiller - get thistle flower, get elder berry, get rowen berry, get mint leaf, go to kitchen, drop thistle flower in pot, drop elder berry in pot, drop mint leaf in pot, drop rowen berry in pot, go to garden, e, e, wear weedkiller.

ICE STATION ZERO

By THE GRUE! grund on Commodore 128D

To get rid of the Yeti, light the prlaus stove and throw it at him. Do not open the power station gates until the power is turned off. To turn the power off fire the loaded bazooka at the generator from the top of the watchtower.

QUANN TULLA

By THE GRUE! gurgled on Commodore 128D

The 3 Quan Datsbanks have to be accessed to enable any progress. This is done by inserting the Infradat Card, the 1st databank gives a game message only.

To destroy the crane, roll the lead ball.

Squeeze the sponge to get rid of the Sharpshot Tracer.

AGATHA'S FOLLY PART TWO

By JILL CARTER played on Spectrum +2A

Use the feather as a pen.

Throw the pebbles for Ted to get the blue parchment.

Cut the creepers with the shards.

Tie vine the to Ted and throw the pebbles to get him to pull the stsiactite across the fissure.

Press the red eye on the statue to reveal a secret entrance.

Rub the leaves on infected wounds.

THE SLAUGHTER CAVES

By JILL CARTER played on Spectrum +2A

Find the torch and extinguish it.

Wedge the door open with the pot.

Remove the collar from the dog and wear it to kill the snake.

DO NOT wear the crown until the end of the game.

Close your eyes and turn the Medusa to stone with the mirror!

Enter the cage and scoop the rocks into the bucket.

To kill the frog you'll need the sword.

Drinking water from the pool replenishes strength.

Don't fight the Mummy - burn it!

Say "Open Sessae" to enter the Temple when you have the wand.

APPLETON

By MARGO PORTEOUS played on 48K Spectrum

Start off with a prayer, then a wish and a prayer, but on the way to

church get the free gum from post office as a treat for the choir boy.
 The vicarage has some useful objects and a clue, plus the chance to do
 a good deed which will set you on your way.
 The Vicar is a buxy aan, so as soon as you've talked to him head
 straight for the pub and buy some beer. Then drinking it will open the
 door to much more - but make sure the vicar is still with you, or
 you'll never get rid of that ringing in your ears!
 To cross the bog, read the book. You need the STEUQAR and GNI RTS (EIT
 GNI RTS, EIT STEUQAR). You also need these later on, so hang on to
 them. It will pay you to examine the signs and notices.
 Save before going down from the cellar as you only get one more chance
 to go back that way again. (You'll need to have with you, or leave
 below the cellar, the DROC, STEUQAR and GNI RTS, LEVDHS, HCROT,
 ORAQRTUO RDTQM and CITSALP EBUT, before you descend for the second
 time!.

BOOSE UP

By JACKIE HOLT played on Spectrum

Can't find flowers? Before you've scored, pick them then collect them.

To get in football ground - wear scarf!

Can't find Military Uniform? Move boxes in Junk Shop. Wear it to enter
 army camp.

Can't find plug? Examine the sink.

Can't find apple? Examine the orchard.

Can't find acorn? Climb a tree in the housing estate.

Can't find 3 coins? Drop four!

Can't find cheese? Search Theatre.

Can't find Spur? Take Clive Allen.

SOULDRINKER

By PAUL BRUNYEE played on Atari ST

From the Wood Cutter's Copee, take dagger and move S, S, S, E, E, S,
 S, E, S, S, W to the Village Path where the Orc blocks your progress.
 Throw dagger at Orc to dispatch him.

In your Father's Store take shield to hear a sound like a bolt being
 drawn. Examine the floor to reveal an access point to the cellar.

To make a light source you will need the oily rags and stick, together
 with the wire. To light the torch, you will need an item hidden in the
 cave mouth.

For protection from the heat when with Satan, you will need three
 articles of armour.

ONCE UPON A LILY PAD

By JUNE RDWE played on Spectrum

A carrot, sure, will stop a horse,
 But not for long enough, of course.
 You still can't cross that blessed road,
 Until the horse is in drunken mode.
 How to get him drunk, you ask?
 Make a brew, that is your task.
 Examine the mound to find a scroll,
 The recipe's there for you to unroll.
 Old Hopper's Gutrot, that's the stuff,
 But getting ingredients might be rough.
 A golden chalice, a silver ring,
 Then crushed berries are the thing.
 The final item for the wine
 Is purloined hedgehog spina!



SERIALISED SOLUTIONS

LANCELOT - LEVEL 9

By THE WAYFARER



Continued.....

S, S, D, OUT, W and you are in the formal gardens to the castle, where a pair of gloves and a hat are. **Wear GLOVES** and **IN** (tearing the bars of the Royal Boudoir window open with your bare hands). You injure your hand doing this, but spend the night in the arms of your love, the Queen. **OUT** of the window, **E, IN** and you are back in the castle. **U** and you are on the landing just in time to hear your Queen denounced as an adulteress, your blood having been found on her pillow. As you are wearing the gloves you are not immediately spotted as the culprit, but are challenged by Sir Meliagaunt and after a fight you fall into the dungeon, having been given a further 20 points for being challenged and a further 10 points for arriving at the dungeon. The Queen will face execution in 3 days if no one champions her to prove her innocence.

A maiden comes to your cell with food, and says that she will release you for a kiss and a promise to love her alone. On the third day of your captivity she offers to release you for a kiss and no promise intended. **KISS MAIDEN**. **FIND QUEEN** takes you to the lawns outside the castle, where the queen is tied to a stake with the evil Sir Meliagaunt ready to light the fire. After a pitched battle you prove the queen innocent and release her from the stake (gaining 30 points for this) and are taken to the landing of the palace. **NB: Down** takes you to the throne room, but you cannot climb the stairs. Your room is on the west side of the landing, the Queen's is to the east. You know that it is Arthur's wish that you embark on the quest for the Holy Grail, but realise that you cannot leave without saying farewell to the queen, your only love. Undressed, and unarmed you go **E** and **E** again into the Queen's bedroom, you have scarcely started your goodbyes when there is a knock at the door and a demand that it be opened. **GET STOOL**. **QUEEN**, **WAIT THEN CLOSE DOOR**. **OPEN DOOR**. Sir Colgrevaunce bursts into the room, the Queen shuts the door and you **ATTACK COLGREVAUNCE WITH STOOL**. Knocked unconscious you take the knight's sword and armour and defend the Queen's good name against the knights outside. You have scored 10 points for entering the Queen's room, and a further 30 for defending her honour in it. A maximum of 600 out of 600 points scored for games 1 and 2, and you are automatically started on game 3.

GAME 3 - THE QUEST.

Twenty years have passed since you left Camelot. The knights have dispersed to follow the Holy Grail. You find yourself in the chapel of Vagon Castle, in front of the altar. As you are about to embark on a holy quest, **PRAY** (or be called Lancelot the Infidel) and **WAIT FOR GALAHAD**. **E, E** to a fork where are a cross and a chalice. **EXAMINE CROSS** and ignore the chalice (or be known as Lancelot the thief). **NW, N** to outside a church where a false preacher tries to persuade you to bring him the jewelled crown by the cross. **MAKE SIGN OF THE CROSS** and the demon vanishes, giving you a 20 point score. **S, SW, SE, S** and you are in shady woods protected by a knight. This knight has sworn to kill Lancelot, **KNIGHT, I AM LANCELOT** in response to his demand to know who you are. **ATTACK KNIGHT** and keep attacking until he is defeated, and you are free to pass having gained 10 points. **E** and you are outside a pavilion where a damsel begs your help. **IN** and you gain a further 10, but ignore the cakes you are offered. If you eat them you lose 10 each for first and second and 50 for the third.

TO BE CONTINUED.....

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